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## Kennedy, Church, Nixon Aide

# CIA Copies Their Trivial Mail

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In January 1968 a person with a scarcely legible Armenian-sounding name wrote to Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., from Soviet Armenia to thank him for information regarding a U.S.-Soviet health exchange program.

In June 1968 Ray Price, a longtime friend and aide of Richard M. Nixon, was visiting the Soviet Union. He wrote to Nixon concerning the campaign for the Republican presidential nomination.

Sometime in 1971 Sen. Frank Church, D-Idaho, while on a trip to the Soviet Union, wrote some traveler's observations to his mother-in-law in Boise, Idaho.

What these letters have in common — aside from apparently being overwhelmingly trivial — is that they were opened, read and copied by the CIA. The original letters then went on to the addressee but the copies went into the CIA's files.

The Senate Intelligence Committee said yesterday that the CIA also intercepted the mail of Federal Reserve Board Chairman Arthur F. Burns; Sen. Hubert H. Humphrey, D-Minn.; Rep. Bella Abzug, D-N.Y.; former West Virginia Secretary of State Jay Rockefeller, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.; his wife, Coretta; Harvard University; the Ford Foundation; the Rockefeller Foundation; Nobel Prize-winning scientist Linus Pauling, author John Steinbeck and former United Auto Workers official Victor Reuther.

Church, the Intelligence Committee's chairman, confessed that he did not know why the mail of those individuals was opened. Nor did he know how frequently their correspondence was intercepted. But he said he was determined to find out.

One thing Church said he knew for a certainty — the letter openings the committee now knows about are only

a small fraction of the total handled by the CIA during a program which began in 1954 and ended in 1973.

Church said the committee will ask Nixon to testify on the CIA mail-intercept program.

The names of Pauling, Steinbeck and Reuther were on a CIA "watch list" which included about 1,200 other individuals of interest to the agency. But Church said the other names discussed at the hearing were not on the watch list.

"It is obvious the opening of mail was not restricted to any particular watch list and may have gone very far afield," Church said.

Under CIA procedures, correspondence between individuals on the watch list and Communist countries, chiefly the Soviet Union, was routinely opened and copied. Church said the committee hopes to find out how frequently the letters of persons not included on the list were opened.

Other names on the watch list have not been made public.

A spokesman for Kennedy first learned of the interception of his mail Tuesday when he received a copy of the letter he had received in 1968 from Armenia. The spokesman said Kennedy was told the copy was from

CIA files but that there was no indication of whether additional letters of his had been opened.

Committee sources described the Price-Nixon letter, which is the only letter involving the former president of which the committee is aware. There was no indication of whether Nixon learned of the interception.

Humphrey said he knew nothing of the opening of his mail until he heard it from the committee.

In a statement, the former vice president called the interception "a prime example of bureaucratic arrogance, violation of law, invasion of privacy and abuse of power." He added wryly, "If they are going to read my mail, I wish they would answer it."

The Rockefeller Commission report on the CIA revealed the existence of the mail opening program, concentrated in New York with branch operations in San Francisco and New Orleans. But the commission did not name the individuals whose mail was read.

James Angleton, former CIA chief of counterintelligence, said mail interception was a good source of information because the Russians trusted the integrity of the U.S. mails and sent sometimes sensitive information through regular mail.

"Much of the mail and the content of the mail would not have come to us if they (the Soviets) had known of the program," Angleton said.

Angleton, whose opposition to detente with the Soviets put him at odds with Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger, conceded that mail interception was illegal. But he said intelligence agencies must be given some "latitude" in dealing with security threats.